## The Simplicity of Heroism

By Rene Benjamin

*Translated, with Introductory Comment, by W. L. McPherson*

*Here is another of those admirable stories of René Benjamin. This writer has a singular freshness and originality of touch. Never hackneyed or conventional, he goes at once to the heart of a situation or an incident. More successfully, perhaps, than any other author in France he has caught the true spirit of the war and of the men who are fighting it. He sees the war from within as well as from without—a feat which can be accomplished by no one who is not at the same time a poet and a realist.*

*The simplicity of heroism is one of M. Benjamin's favorite topics. It is one of the great outstanding truths of this war—and of every war.*

It was at a first aid post at C——, on a quiet evening.

I was saying to the major: "What is especially admirable in our men is the simplicity with which they bear themselves—with which they face death. People tell them that they are heroes. They shrug their shoulders. That word has been hackneyed by too much legendary boasting. It repels to-day these simple people, whose resignation is so unostentatious. Watch them in the heat of action. No words for effect, no prepared gestures. They do what they have to do, as they are told to do it, and die, if necessary, because in these times to die—that is only an incident of life. Almost always they are simple, very simple."

The major listened to me without answering. I pressed him.

"Is that not your opinion—your real opinion? And you see them at such close quarters, at the moment of their worst suffering, when a man thinks less than ever of assuming an attitude."

He replied:

"I follow you and I believe you. But personally what do I know? I am very badly situated to know. A wounded man arrives. I am in a hurry to examine him. As to what he thinks I am too busy to concern myself. I forget all about the man and his morale. How have I the time? I must try to save him. To interest myself specially in one is to neglect another. The war may last thirty years, my friend. I shall have seen stomachs torn open, brains laid bare and limbs smashed to jelly, but I shall know nothing, absolutely nothing, of our Frenchmen. I bend over them. But I have no reaction. Still less have I any leisure. Or, when I have any, there is no one here to study. While I dine I run over one or two newspapers which my wife sends me, and I read in them brilliant stories of the war written by journalists, who, without doubt, are safe at home, but in whom I have every confidence because they satisfy my old belief that the soldier of our country always has a plume in his helmet."

. . . . . .

I tossed my head and he continued:

"I notice your air. In your opinion, I am at the stage of the 'History of France, Illustrated for Children.' My dear sir, I am naïve, like so many men are who are entirely absorbed in action."

"But," I said, "at least you hear them talk—your wounded."

"They pass out of sight. I forget."

"And your hospital attendants. They remain with you. Learn from them human simplicity."

"Oh, yes, on that point I read"——

"But it isn't necessary to read. All that is fabricated at the rear. Or, if you must read, you ought to read Vigny. The page where Vigny, in 'Servitude and Grandeur,' describes the terrible explosion of the donjon of Vincennes. Suddenly, in a courtyard, against a wall, he finds a head separated from a body. It is that of an adjutant, who, for sixty pages or more, has been the hero of the story. At that *coup de théâtre* the reader gives a shudder. But Vigny adds tranquilly: 'At that moment a young soldier, a fresh, rosy-cheeked blond, bent down to take from the smoke-stained trunk a black silk cravat.'"

"That is still a good story," said the major.

"Look, my dear man," I continued, "at the funeral sermon—human and admirable—which we hear every day. Over against death there is always life, which, without fear or worry, continues its normal, habitual routine. Listen! I recall our first man killed—in August, 1914. It is always terrible, you know—the first. After the tenth the emotion subsides. But the first one to be a 'victim,' as they say—the first whom all the others see fall—one can never chase that souvenir out of his memory."

"Very well. The first victim in my regiment was struck at the entrance to a village which we attacked and captured. Very easily, too; for the Germans were so afraid to defend it that they evacuated it. Toward evening we occupied it. But in a few hours an order came to retire. We were relieved. Chasseurs replaced us—or rather they were to replace us. In any case, we had a formal order to withdraw at once.

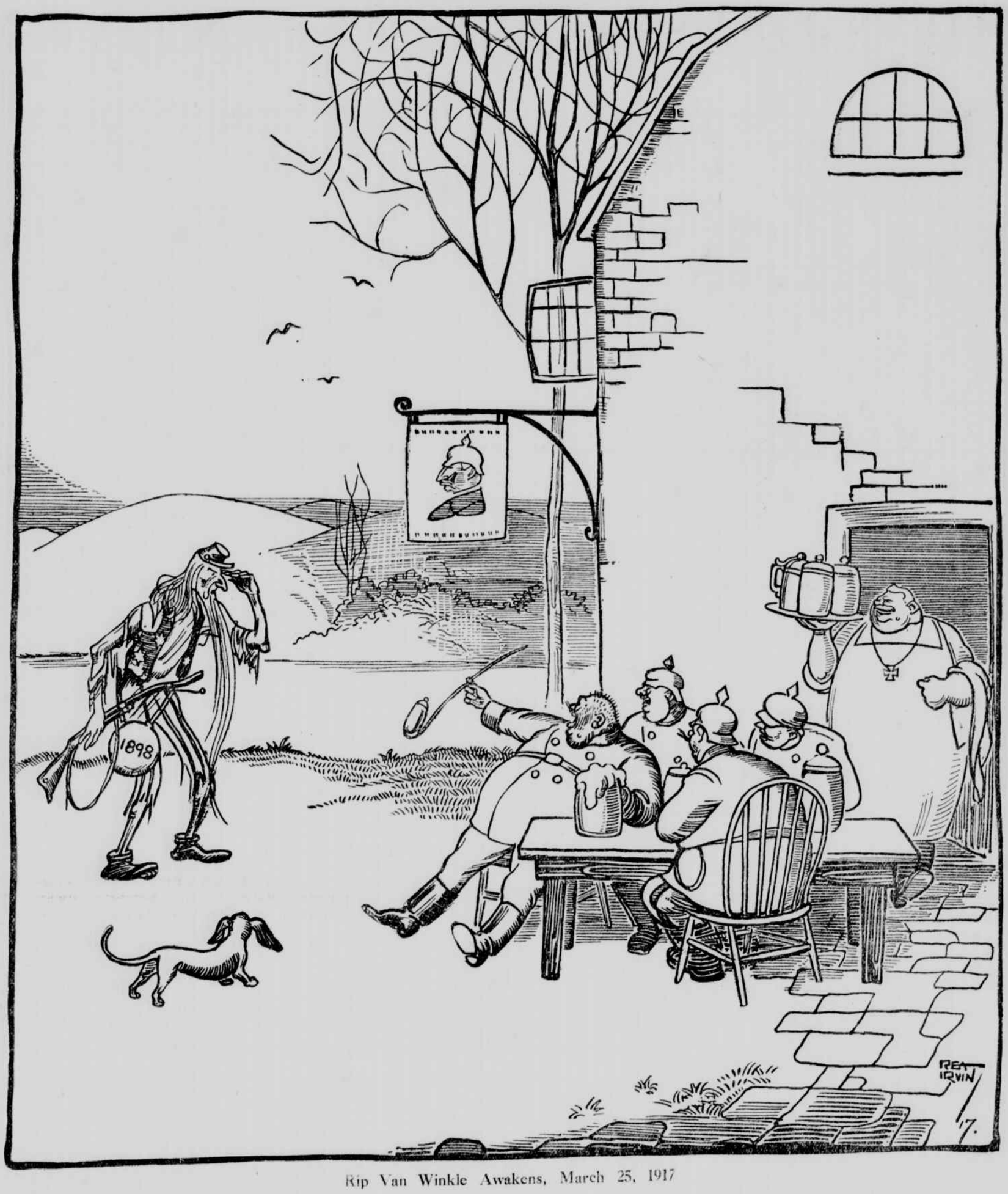
"It was necessary that the Boches, who were only two hundred metres (not further) away from us, should not suspect our departure. A remarkable trick to play on them and one which appears improbable in this frightful war. But we went through a quarter of an hour of high comedy in that village—an episode more absurd than heroic, a sort of adventure taken from the history of ancient Greece. Those who entered most into the spirit of it took off their shoes. The others marched on their tip-toes. One heard nervous laughs, half suppressed. Finally, under the very noses the Boches, we left the village completely empty. Yes, my friend, without a single defender.

"No, pardon me, there was one—that first man of the regiment to get killed. We found him against the wall of a house, on his knees, in the position of a man who kneels in order to aim better. He had remained in that position, his body a little stiffened and his arms

*Continued on Page Eight*

# THIS DAY IN AMERICAN HISTORY

By REA IRVIN




Rip Van Winkle Awakens, March 25, 1917

# ARE WOMEN PEOPLE?

## *By Alice Duer Miller*

How very much shocked every one would be, what talk about sex antagonism would ensue, if a committee of especially wise women met to debate the question whether or not men were human beings!

And yet, in connection with the coming Constitutional Convention, the Supreme Court of Massachusetts is preparing to hand down a decision on the question whether or not women are people.

### The Favorite of the Law.

"Tell me, am I a person, mister?"

"Nobody knows but the judges, sister.
Only those men, astute and wise,
With long gray beards and spectacled eyes;
And they are studying volumes dusty,
Full of decisions old and musty,
Rulings, reversals, precedent,
Interpretations and intent,
And, above all, what Blackstone really meant.
When they've examined these minutely,
Reasoned and argued most acutely,
They'll tell you—and, oh! it will help a lot—
If women are people, or if they're not."

"But, whatever the judges tell me, sir,
I can't help feeling as if I were."

"Irrational, foolish, emotional sis;
We cannot allow you thoughts like this.
You must wait with patience, respect and awe,
And feel what the gentlemen say is law."

### We Still Have with Us To-day

It is obvious to Mr. Everett P. Wheeler, and he does not hesitate to confess it in one of his chivalrous anti-suffrage tracts, that "when many suffragists are strenuous against a double standard of sex morality, what they want is to lower the standard for women."

It was equally obvious to certain gentlemen in England, when Florence Nightingale was strenuous against the conditions of the military hospitals, that what she really wanted was an opportunity for flirtation with the soldiers.

### Cost of the Democratic Principle

Though the Massachusetts Anti-Suffrage Association always reports with pleasure any rise in taxes in a suffrage state, it has not given any publicity to the following facts, which, "The Woman's Journal" says, were elicited by a recent commission:

That the governmental expenses of Massachusetts are 25 per cent higher per capita than those of any other state.

That the state debt of Massachusetts is 100 per cent higher per capita than that of any other state in the Union, and 640 per cent higher than the average state's debt per capita.

Nor do any of the anti-suffrage associations, while mourning over the increase in the cost of voting in Chicago from 31 cents to 32 cents per capita, mention that in New York it is $1.50.

### Our Own Anti-Suffrage School

**(Lesson 1—How to Write Anti-Suffrage News)**

N. B.—This is very easy, and can be done by any one with good eyes, a pair of shears and a distrust of democracy.

**Rule 1**—Select any item from the daily papers in which a woman figures disadvantageously, and reprint it under the heading, The Sex that Would Purify Politics.

**Rule 2**—Always refer to any woman who breaks the law as a well known suffragist. As the great majority of women believe in suffrage, the chances are you may be right; and in any case it will be difficult to prove you wrong.

**Rule 3**—Select any crime that occurs in a state where women vote, and imply in your heading that it is the result of woman suffrage.

Ex.—"Man knocked down and robbed in the streets of Chicago." Head this: Where Ladies Vote.

**Rule 4**—Attribute a ridiculous assertion to the suffragists, and then refute it gloriously.

Ex.—Suffragists have always told us that if women voted there would be no more street accidents. Four vehicles ran into each other last week in the streets of——(name any suffrage city).

### Familiar Words

The Premier of Hungary says that he regards the extension of the suffrage as a "national menace."

He was, however, speaking of giving the vote to men under thirty.

We are sending the men under thirty a pink pamphlet showing that their demand for the ballot is a criticism of their fathers and grandfathers, and will create age-antagonism if they are not careful.

### Catching Up with Russia.

("Elections to a constitutional assembly will be based on universal suffrage."—*Press clipping.*)

Oh, what a glad day it would be
If Turkestan, New York and Prussia
Would make their citizens as free
As Russia!

## The Illustrators Illustrated

*Continued from Page Five*

You must succeed in business for me—I will make you."

Over in the studio General Motor, of Detroit, calls. He has been tipped off to the beauties of Jackyl's picture, "Monotony at Lyme." Curves Carroll, the model, shows him another, in the same happy vein, called "The Potter's Field," which he buys at a big price.

Then Bourgeois White drops into the office. He is an artist who has been completely won over to business affairs. He asks Snide how the business is progressing, and Snide replies: "Rotten! Getting the money is too easy—taking it is too hard. The Miasma proposition is too big as it stands. It can't *go* through, and it makes a hell of a noise when it *falls* through."

White insists that if a start is made money will drive in, but Snide says they can't always go on showing plaster models and water color sketches, and that some day some one will want to see the deeds.

Snide rebels, and says that he is serious, and is going back to painting.

"Yes, you would be going back," says White.

"I wasn't meant for business," counters Snide. "I'm no Joseph P. Day."

White—You ain't no John Sargent, either.

Snide—I want to paint——

White—So do all the nuts.

When White takes the stenographer out to lunch he doesn't include Snide in the invitation because, he says, "there isn't any complementary color for blues." Snide, alone in the office, festoons the typewriter cloth cover into a crape, which he hangs upon his desk. As a business man Snide is dead.

Over in the studio Artist Jackyl receives Thomas Warbride, another picture buyer. His interest in Jackyl's pictures is shown to be that of a speculator gambling on the worth of Jackyl's pictures when the artist is dead. It is by this means that the authors have shown that Jackyl has arrived as a painter, and this thought is further driven home when John Hancock, the celebrity sharpshooter, calls with an offer of fifty thousand dollars' worth of publicity for the artist.

"But I hate publicity," says the artist.

Hancock—That's because you never had any. After you get the habit you'll be always in front of the camera.

Jackyl insists that he wishes to work by himself, alone, and Hancock replies: "If you stick to that line of patter, you may be famous all right—after you're dead. Indorse my tobacco and the limelight shines on you."

Jackyl—But I don't smoke a pipe—cigars occasionally, and cigarettes, but never a pipe.

Snide—Irvin Cobb could have written: "I like Battleaxe." But he's paid by the word, so he pulled a long sentence: "I don't see any reason why I should not say that I like Battleaxe, because I do, very much."

Jackyl—I get you—but I couldn't think of anything clever to say—it ought to be clever, of course.

Hancock has a ready-made quotation from Nathan Hale—"I only regret that I have but one life to give—to Battleaxe."

Jackyl remarks that this doesn't sound dignified, but Hancock assures him that when that message begins to ring in the ears of the multitude Jackyl will have accomplished more than he could in twenty years of patient work. He asks for a signed authorization and a good photograph. Jackyl demurs about going through with it, and Hancock comes back: "Didn't Nero start a fire to draw attention to his fiddling? Man! It's a golden opportunity."

"My advent into advertising," says Jackyl, as he signs the authorization, while Hancock, bowing his thanks, says: "People that never heard of Michael Angelo will know Jean Jackyl. Like Spearmint gum, your name will be in everybody's mouth."

The concluding scene is between the model and the painter. He tells her he needs her, always, and that she brought him back to painting, and the model replies: "And you won't ever tire of it? You won't ever go back to that horrid office and to business life? Tell me you won't."

And Jackyl replies: "I only regret that I have but one life to give—to you."